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Great Britain players take the knee before the match against Chile on Wednesday as preliminary events begin in Tokyo | AFP

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TOKYO 2020

WOMEN'S SKEET WORLD NO. 1 COVID POSITIVE, OUT OF OLY

'Devastated' GB athlete, Amber Hill withdraws days before Games, three others, too, sidelined after contracting virus

6 POLES SENT BACK HOME; SWEDEN STUN U.S.

Six Polish swimmers had to be sent back home after a clerical error that left the contingent stunned. An administrative error by the Polish Swimming Federation saw them send 23 athletes instead of 17. Meanwhile, Sweden handed the US women's team, the defending Olympic and world champion, a 3-0 defeat on the first day of the preliminary rounds

TEAMS KNEEL IN FIGHT FOR EQUALITY

- Multiple teams interlocked arms or took the knee as they continue their fight for equality. The IOC, which had a blanket ban on protests, has allowed athletes to 'protest' with 'restrictions'
- One more Czech athlete, Pavel Sirucek, tested positive in the Games Village. He's the third member of the delegation | P13

2032

BRISBANE WILL BE THE HOST OF THE 2032 SUMMER GAMES

CHENNAI • MADURAI • VIJAYAWADA • BENGALURU • KOCHI • HYDERABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOZHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVAMOGGA • MANGALURU • TIRUPATI • TIRUCHY • TIRUNELVELI • SAMBALPUR • HUBBALLI • DHARMAPURI • KOTTAYAM • KANNUR • VILLUPURAM • KOLLAM • WARANGAL • TADEPALLIGUDEM • NAGAPATTINAM • THRISSUR • KALABURAGI

One more seer in solidarity, BSY keeps pensive silence

Chief Minister appeals to his supporters not to indulge in protest

ANUSHA RAVI @ Bengaluru

"PRIME Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah and BJP national president JP Nadda have an immense special concern for me. Nobody has been given the opportunity to work as Chief Minister after the age of 75, but I have been extended that courtesy," Chief Minister BS Yediyurappa was quoted as saying by Siddalinga Swamy, head seer of the all-important Siddaganga Mutt. The seer was talking to the media after his meeting with Yediyurappa on Wednesday, the second consecutive day of pontiffs showing solidarity with Yediyurappa, calling on him at his official residence amid the buzz of leadership change.

While the chief minister chose to remain mum on seers meeting him back to back, Siddalinga Swamy said the delegation of various religious chiefs insisted that Yediyurappa should continue as chief minister for the rest of his term. "He did not say anything about his resignation, but we insisted that he continue in the post. He has earned the love of people cutting across communities. He told us that he will work tirelessly for the party until his last breath," the seer said.

On Tuesday, some 20 seers from various mutts met Yediyurappa and on Wednesday, the number was over 50. Prominent chiefs of religious institutions, like Murugha Mutt's Sri Shivamurthy Sharanaru, Madara Channayya Mutt seer Sri Basavamurthy Madara Channayya Swamy, Rambhapuri Peetha seer Sri Prasanna Renuka Veerasomeshwar Shivacharya Swami and Siddalinga Swamy, have come out in support of Yediyurappa. Others like Kolada Mutt seer Shanthaveera Swami and Lingayat Panchamasali Peetha Jayamruthyunjaya Swamy have asked for someone from within the community to replace Yediyurappa. P4

Siddalinga Swamy of Siddaganga Mutt, along with other seers, at a meeting with Chief Minister BS Yediyurappa in Bengaluru on Wednesday | VINOD KUMAR T

CM's ANNIVERSARY LUNCH CANCELLED

Amidst the buzz surrounding CM Yediyurappa being asked to step down, a lunch meeting scheduled with legislators at a Bengaluru hotel, to mark his two years in office, has been cancelled. However, when asked, BJP state president Nalin Kumar Kateel said he was unaware of the reason behind the cancellation. P4

THOSE WHO QUIT CONG, JDS WARY

At a time when there is confusion in the state over leadership change, political circles are abuzz with speculation about the fate of former Congress and JDS legislators who joined the BJP to help it form the government in 2019. A senior BJP leader, however, said their interests will be protected. P4

Inter-ministerial Israeli panel to probe Pegasus

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

WITH the global Pegasus snooping scandal snowballing, Israel is learnt to have set up a senior inter-ministerial team to examine allegations of its abuse, since the spyware belongs to an Israeli firm, the NSO Group.

Parallelly, India's Parliamentary Standing Committee on Information and Technology led by Congress leader Shashi Tharoor is expected to question top government officials on who ordered the snooping, when it meets next Wednesday, said sources.

Israel's National Security Council (NSC) has been tasked to head the Pegasus probe team. Interestingly, it is the NSC that oversees NSO exports. For its part, the NSO Group said it will thoroughly investigate any credible proof of misuse of its technologies and "will shut down the system where necessary".

The Israeli action appears to be part of its attempts to avert diplomatic flare-ups after suspected abuse of Pegasus was found in France, Mexico, India, Morocco and Iraq. Prominent among the spyware's targets were 10 prime ministers, three presidents and a king.

Since NSO claims it sells only to vetted governments, the needle of suspicion for the snoopgate started pointing towards the ruling dispensations. While Pegasus is meant to help thwart threats to national security, its possible use against political opponents to destabilise governments or win elections indicated its abuse.

Back home, the Tharoor-led parliamentary panel has summoned senior officials from the Ministry of Electronics, Information and Technology and the Ministry of Home Affairs to its meeting on July 28. The agenda is citizens' data security and privacy, according to a notification from the Lok Sabha Secretariat.

On Wednesday, the global media consortium that is doing the spyware expose, added the names of officials of farm giant Monsanto and other anti-CAA activists as potential targets of Pegasus. Six mobile numbers of Monsanto were added to the list in 2018 when it came under the radar for allegedly selling genetically modified seeds. Also, Samujjal Bhattacharjee, AASU member who was at the forefront of the anti-CAA protests in Assam, was on the list along with ULFA's Anup Chetia.

I propose Sharadji (Sharad Pawar) and Chidambaramji (P Chidambaram) to call a meeting of Opposition leaders. I will act as a worker and follow the instructions given by the leaders of the alliance
Mamata Banerjee

MAMATA ENTERS NATIONAL RING

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Kolkata/New Delhi

GIVING a call to uproot the BJP in the 2024 general elections, Trinamool Congress chief Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday urged the Opposition to keep aside all other interests and unite against the Modi government, which she alleged wants to 'turn India into a surveillance state'.

Representatives of nine Opposition parties attended the live screening of her speech at Constitution Club in Delhi. They included Sharad Pawar and Supriya Sule (both NCP), P Chidambaram and Digvijaya Singh (both Cong), Ram Gopal Yadav and Jaya Bachchan (both SP), Tiruchi Siva (DMK), Dr Keshava Rao (TRS), Sanjay Singh (AAP), Manoj Jha (RJD), Priyanka Chaturvedi (Shiv Sena) and Sardar Balwinder Singh Bhunder (Shiromani Akali Dal).

Taking her *Khela Hobe* pitch to the national stage, she said *Khela* (game) will happen in all other states in the 2024 elections until the BJP-led government is derailed from the Centre. She requested all non-BJP parties to start planning from now as only two-and-a-half-years is left. The call for Opposition unity comes ahead of her scheduled four-day visit to Delhi starting July 25.

Buoyed by the massive Bengal victory, the Trinamool for the first time organised the screening of Mamata's virtual address in Delhi, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh and other states, showcasing her as an anti-BJP leadership face. Underlining the national emphasis of her speech, Mamata spoke for 45 minutes in Bengali, Hindi, and English.

Referring to her party's stupendous victory in the 2021 Assembly elections, Mamata said: "The game is not over yet. The game will continue until the BJP is uprooted from the Centre."

Aiming to unite all oppositions under one umbrella, Mamata said, "We have no time to waste... Forget your all-other interests. Now we should focus on one interest, which is saving the country. If we form an alliance shortly before polls, it may not work. I will be in Delhi shortly. I propose Sharadji and Chidambaramji to call a meeting of Opposition leaders. I will act as a worker and follow the instructions given by the leaders of the alliance."

Interestingly, she did not urge the Gandhi family to initiate Opposition unity. Her call is her first move to venture into national politics ahead of the 2024 elections.

MORE ON: P9

Crucial sero-survey data in cold storage, experts divided over analysis

CHETANA BELAGERE @ Bengaluru

WHILE Karnataka grapples with the fear of an anticipated third wave of Covid-19, the State Government's most important report on serosurveillance data — which helps the state predict the impact of the third wave — is lying in cold storage. The reasons, according to sources, is that the seroprevalence in Karnataka is as low as 14 per cent, which is way lower than the first serosurveillance, which showed the seroprevalence at 27 per cent.

"The survey, which started towards January-end, was completed by March and analysed by April. They realised that seroprevalence in the state was less than what it was in the earlier survey. A sub-survey in May has also been analysed and the findings submitted to the government," a senior doctor, who is part of the expert committee set up by the government to manage Covid-19, said.

A health worker collects swab samples of a passenger at Majestic bus stand in Bengaluru on Wednesday | SUDHAKARA

Karnataka's sero-survey data actually goes against the ICMR theory that states are showing good seroprevalence. This could be one of the reasons the results of the survey have not yet been announced, the senior doctor said.

However, another expert, who requested anonymity, said the report submitted to the State Government has added the findings of the two seroprevalence surveys to show an increase in presence of antibodies among a good section of the population in Karnataka.

CONTINUED ON: P3

Afghan man with fake ID caught working at shipyard

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Kochi

IN a major security lapse, an Afghan national managed to work in the Cochin Shipyard (CSL) for more than a year using a fake identification document that showed him an Indian.

Idgul, alias Abbas Khan, 24, had been working in the shipyard under a sub-contractor since 2020. He had gone absconding after he suspected his real identity was exposed. A special team of Kerala police nabbed him from Kolkata and produced before court, which remanded in judicial custody on Tuesday.

Ernakulam South Police Inspector M S Faisal said the accused claimed to be from Assam but was in possession of an Afghan passport. "He had been absconding for the past few days. We traced his mobile location and nabbed him from Kolkata," the officer said, adding his father Barath Khan was suspected to be an Afghan citizen, while his mother Dalero Begum hailed from Assam.

According to preliminary probe, Khan came to India in 2018 on a medical visa. Later, he forged his identity documents to reach Kochi and secure a job under a sub-contractor in Cochin Shipyard. Khan came to Kochi because a few of his relatives from Assam were already working in the shipyard under the sub-contractor.

There are also rumours that he had some issues with his cousins and it was one of them who leaked his real identity to the shipyard security.

A CSL spokesperson said one of the workmen of a sub-contractor was known by a different name than that was submitted in his documents. During a re-verification of the documents by the shipyard security, it was found that he had absconded. The matter was immediately reported to the police, the spokesperson added.

Eid comes to border villages after 3 yrs

K SHIVA KUMAR @ Mysuru

WHEN one thought the effects of global warming and climate change would be apparent decades later, there has been increasing evidence of environment-related catastrophes occurring across the globe in our lifetime. In recent days, Germany has faced flash foods, stunning scientists, Central China is in the midst of unprecedented rain and flooding, killing 25 and affecting over a million people, and on Tuesday, New Yorkers woke up to a haze as forest fires have been raging in western parts of the US.

Muslims offer prayers on the occasion of Bakrid at Quba Masjid in Kalasipalya, in Bengaluru on Wednesday | SRIKANTH RH

The situation in different parts of India is no different. But DB Kuppe and Machur — villages along the Karnataka-Kerala border — had a pleasant respite, in the midst of the various climatic catastrophes seen around the world. After a gap of three years, the villagers, predominantly Muslim, could celebrate Bakrid because this year there was no flooding. Flash floods and heavy rain had prevented them from celebrating Eid the past three years.

On Wednesday, the villages were decked up and mosques wore a festive look, as the devotees offered prayers of gratitude for saving them from another flood and natural calamity. P7

EXPRESS READ

Over 8 lakh students scheduled to write SSLC exam on June 22

BENGALURU: More than 8.1 lakh students are scheduled to write their second SSLC board examination on July 22. The examination for the three language papers will be held together in a three-hour session, with 40 marks dedicated to each paper | P7

NATIONWIDE	JULY 20	JULY 21
Fresh cases	30,093	42,015
Recoveries	45,254	36,977
Deaths	374	3,998

KARNATAKA	JULY 20	JULY 21
Fresh cases	1,464	1,639
Recoveries	2,706	2,214
Deaths	29	36

JAB-O-METER

TAKE YOUR SHOT

July 20
31,79,469 doses

July 21
20,83,892 doses

TOTAL DOSES
41,76,56,752

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